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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Intergovernmental Group on the
Least Developed Countries
Seventh session

Preparatory Committee for the
Second United Nations Conference
on the Least Developed Countries
(Geneva, 26 March 1990)

DECLARATION BY THE MINISTERS OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Addendum

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

At the request of the Foreign Minister, Government of Bangladesh, and Chairman, Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries, the attached documents of the Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 10-12 February 1990) are being circulated as a document of the Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries acting as the Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

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CONTENTS

		Page
I.	ORGANIZATION OF WORK	1
II.	STATEMENTS AND MESSAGE	4
III.	AGENDA OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING	14
IV.	LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	15
V.	LIST OF DOCUMENTS	23

I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The Ministers of the Least Developed Countries met in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 10 to 12 February 1990.

2. Among others, the Ministers deliberated on issues and matters pertaining to the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

3. The Ministerial Meeting had before it a "Draft declaration by the Ministers of the least developed countries at their meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh".

4. The Meeting also had before it background documents submitted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). (For the list of documents, see section V.)

5. The Meeting held its inaugural session in the morning of 10 February 1990.

6. Welcoming remarks were made by H.E. Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, who later made a statement (see section II.B).

7. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Secretary-General of the Second United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, Mr. K.K.S. Dadzie, read a message to the Meeting from the Secretary-General of the United Nations (see section II.D). He also made a statement (see section II.C).

8. The Meeting was formally inaugurated by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad.

9. The President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh addressed the Meeting. The text of his address is reproduced in section II.A.

10. The Minister of Planning of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Mbembe Jatta, His Excellency Mr. Donald Kalpokas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu, and the Minister of Haiti, His Excellency Michel Bonnet, on behalf of the African, Asian and Latin American least developed countries respectively expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for his inspiring address. They also expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the warm hospitality accorded them and for the excellent facilities provided.

11. The Ministerial Meeting elected by acclamation as its President His Excellency Anisul Islam Mahmud, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

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12. The Ministerial Meeting also elected by acclamation the following office bearers:

His Excellency Dr. Farouq El-Bushra Minister of Commerce, Co-operation and Supply, Sudan	Vice-President
His Excellency, Mr. Michel Bonnet Minister of Planning and Internal Co-operation, Haiti	Vice-President

13. The Meeting adopted the agenda contained in section III.

14. The Meeting established a Committee of the Whole to consider agenda item 5 on the consideration and adoption of a Declaration. His Excellency Dr. Farouq El-Bushra, Foreign Minister of Sudan, Vice-Chairman of the Meeting was elected as the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole.

15. Delegations of 31 least developed countries participated in the Ministerial Meeting.

16. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole presented the report of the Committee, including the amended draft declaration and its annex.

17. The Ministers approved and adopted the report of the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole.

18. The Meeting adopted a declaration entitled "Declaration by the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries at their Meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh" which has an annex entitled "Dhaka Document" presented by the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole.

19. The Meeting also adopted three Decisions, the text of which is annexed to the Declaration.

20. His Excellency Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, moved a vote of thanks to the Government and the people of Bangladesh and expressed deep and sincere appreciation for the hospitality and generosity extended to delegations and for the excellent facilities provided.

21. The Chairman of the Ministerial Meeting made a closing statement.

22. The following least developed countries attended the Ministerial Meeting: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Yemen, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Lesotho, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu and Yemen Arab Republic. The list of participants is in section IV.

23. The following United Nations organizations were represented: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Office of the Director General for Development and International Economic Co-operation

(DIEC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations Centre for Transnational Corporations (UNCTC).

24. His Excellency Mr. Henri Servant, Ambassador and Co-ordinator of the Government of France for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries attended the meeting as a special invitee.

II. STATEMENTS AND MESSAGE

A. Statement by H.E. Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

1. It is with a profound sense of pleasure that I extend to you a very warm welcome. You come to Bangladesh at a time when in this country a soft season breathlessly awaits the advent of spring. For the citizens of Dhaka, your presence adds excitement to the wait. Many of you had to travel much to be here. Many, too, had pressing engagements at home. Nevertheless you decided to come. This underscores the importance of this gathering. And your commitment to our common cause.

2. This cause flows from our desire to improve the lot of our people. In a world of plenty, they remain poor. In a world of movement, their lives are static. In a world full of hope, they are fated to despair. We must pool our intellectual resources together and examine why. We must ameliorate their conditions, and deliberate on how. This is not a simple task. But no task ever meant more to our nations.

3. A feature common to us is that we are all least developed. It is self-evident, therefore, that many of our problems are similar. The issues that we confront are alike. We often have the same experience: like the suffering when the price of our single crop falls; the hunger, when a harvest fails; the desperation, when our exports face a tariff wall; or the pain, when nature inflicts a calamity on us.

4. These result from our constraints, which are many. These are often great liabilities. We are not helped by a colonial past during which we were ruthlessly exploited. But adversities often provide positive responses. Civilizations progress only when challenges to them are surmounted. It is true that the kite rises only against the wind. We must devise a mechanism by which we must overcome the negative factors we face. We must try and transform our liabilities into assets.

5. In this, the leaders in our communities have an enormous responsibility. The elites in our societies form the critical mass that can spur us on to progress. They are the locomotive that can help us move towards the desired goal. In the past they helped us achieve our independence from our colonial rulers. Sometimes I feel a sense of inertia has since benumbed them to inaction. They must be activated. They are the non-technological resources that form the key to our future.

6. I say this to you because I believe you, all of you, are a part of this critical mass, this essential core. Your burden, therefore is a heavy one. Our peoples look up to you for guidance. When you collect in meetings such as this, your action must be tempered by a sense of your historic task. I am confident, indeed positive, that such would be the case in this Dhaka meeting.

7. The world is in a flux. While there remain some areas such as Palestine and the occupied Arab territories where sufferings continue under the jackboot of oppression, most of the globe is engulfed in a whirlwind of change. Most of this is positive. On 21 March the valiant Namibians will wake up to a new

dawn, and independence. We rejoice at the news that Madiba Nelson Mandela will soon be free. We are heartened at the world-wide euphoria arising from nations striving to determine their own destiny. It is simply not fair that, when there is so much of joy all around, life should be without cheer for half a billion people of the least developed countries.

8. The sad story of our times is that the circle of disenchantment for them is ever-widening. The past 10 years, what was to have been a decade of development, became for them a decade of despair. Their condition deteriorated sharply. The causes were many and varied. These included inadequate resource flows, decline in private investment, depressed commodity prices, difficulties in obtaining access to markets, and failure of adjustment programmes to produce results.

9. These factors combined with the essential negative characteristics of the LDCs. These are fundamental, pervasive and structural in nature. To name but a few: extremely low level of income, very limited savings capacity, insufficient and under-utilized resource base, poor technologies, small domestic market, lack of socio-economic infrastructures, and structural rigidities. Add to these the severe geographical and economic disadvantages of the land-locked and island LDCs.

10. On the matrix of this scenario, I was heartened by the decision of the United Nations to convene a Second Conference on the Least Developed Countries this year in Paris. I should be remiss if I did not at this stage express our gratitude to France, to the French, and to President Mitterrand. It is my hope that the Conference would carry out its mandate. I understand this would be to assess progress at the country levels, to review international support measures, and to adopt appropriate policies and measures for the 1990s. A New Plan of Action is what it should aim at.

11. In strategy and tactics, preparation is often half the battle. We must adequately gear ourselves to prepare for the event. The Dhaka meeting is a part of that process. We have organized this at a high level because we sincerely believe that our economic arguments will need to be buttressed by a modicum of political clout. Here the LDC Ministers should address themselves to the vital issues that would constitute the agenda of the forthcoming Conference.

12. We in the LDCs are well aware that our own efforts would be an important determinant of the success of our economic programmes. This is where our leadership will need to play a critical role. For a host of reasons, in an age of warming economic progress, we have been left out in the cold. Many who wield the wand, and cast the spell known as the "magic of the market place", deem us to be non-profitable to invest in. Till we are able to fully redress this situation, we will continue to require substantial increases in official development assistance. We will need to promote a consensus on a more fundamental approach to LDC debt which should include a decisive reduction of the overall debt stock. There must be stabilization of commodity prices and arrangements for compensation for shortfall in export earnings. There is also the need for urgent action to reverse protectionism, exempt the LDCs from quotas and ceilings, and to further simplify and make more flexible the rules of origin.

13. We must ourselves emphasize our social sectors. We must try and eliminate drugs from our communities. We must ensure for our peoples minimal health facilities. We must be able to expand the number of literates to make our population economically more productive. We must involve women in our societies more deeply in the development process.

14. It is a paradox of our age that many parts that are naturally rich are actually poor, and that many parts of the world that are poor in nature enjoy the highest standards of living. Many of you are from Africa. Your continent is blessed with vast resources. Before the colonial times you were prosperous. The Portuguese when they arrived at the Gambia marvelled at the Mandinga Merchants. Products abounded. There was plenty of salt in the Atlantic Coast and Sahara, kola nuts in Liberia, gold in the Akan country, leather in Hausaland, cotton cloth in Western Sudan, iron in Guinea. Centuries of foreign exploitation have exhausted many of these resources. But once again your continent is in ferment. We are your friends and with you in your struggle to return to the global mainstream. I believe in what the Roman General Pliny had said two thousand years ago: "Out of Africa will always emerge something new". The African Century is round the corner.

15. There are some points that I suggest you may wish to give a thought to. I feel the LDCs require some sort of structural arrangement for periodic meetings and exchange of views. I understand almost all our countries are represented at the United Nations. Perhaps our Missions there could constitute such a forum. This would also facilitate consultations at a high level during the General Assembly. The process of monitoring and follow-up of a future Plan of Action would be thus rendered easier.

16. Also, some of our problems require more detailed analyses by ourselves. We have happily no dearth of intellect, only finances. You might wish to consider the establishment of a Centre for Research on LDCs. Of course, funding for this will need to be organized, but I have no doubt it would be resources well spent.

17. I must soon leave you to your task. I pray most fervently for your success. Recently in New York, at an address to the Group of 77, I had asked a question: how much longer must the barge of the LDCs await in the outer anchorage as the ship of the rest of the world sails into the harbour of progress? Our aspiration is that it must not be much longer.

18. Let the Dhaka meeting be a turning point in the evolving history of the LDCs. Let us work in unison for conveying a new message of hope and positive determination not only to our own peoples but also to the economically prosperous and technologically developed nations.

19. I sincerely hope that this august assembly will be successful in giving shape and form to the vital message: that more than 400 million people in the LDCs are now unflinching in their resolve to transform their destiny.

20. We, of the LDCs, are virtual frontiersmen. We are struggling to conquer the veritable last frontier of mankind, the formidable barrier of poverty, hunger and malnourishment, illiteracy and superstition.

21. Historic events are unfolding today in other parts of the world. We in the LDCs must be able to display unity if we are to continue to attract attention and, more important, to compete successfully for the scarce resources. This, the first Ministerial-level Meeting of LDCs should be able to signal such cohesion. We have a long and arduous distance to travel to our goal.

22. We are fighting the ancient enemies of humanity. We deserve and welcome assistance from the more prosperous nations, for it is as much their war as ours. Let them know that if meaningful and effective help comes forth, we shall enter the twenty-first century not as recipients of handouts, but as confident and self-reliant partners in progress.

B. STATEMENT OF H.E. MR. ANISUL ISLAM MAHMUD, FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBIC OF BANGLADESH

Allow me, at the outset, to extend to all of you a very cordial welcome to Bangladesh. We are happy that you are here today to attend the first ever Meeting of the Ministers of all the least developed countries. By your gracious presence from different corners of the world, you have done a unique honour to Bangladesh. We will surely do our best to live up to this trust and expectation.

We are indeed grateful to His Excellency, President Hussain Muhammad Ershad not only for inaugurating this Ministerial Meeting but also for his continuing commitment and support to the cause of LDCs expressed at various global forums. But for his constant encouragement, holding of this Meeting at such short notice would not have been possible. On behalf of the National Steering Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on the LDCs, I convey to you, Mr. President, our sincerest thanks for your wise guidance and far-sighted leadership.

This Ministerial Meeting at Dhaka has a special responsibility to perform. As we approach the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held next month, we as a group have yet to articulate our position in one common forum. Hence the urgent need for this meeting. It is imperative that the LDCs themselves should get an opportunity to work out a combined position for the Paris Conference.

Being the poorest and economically most disadvantaged of all, the LDCs are going through a treadmill situation. Though these countries have embarked on a variety of internal economic reforms and stringent measures aimed at reviving growth, most of them experienced negative growth or stagnation during the 1980s largely due to reasons beyond their control - an unfavourable external environment.

The United Nations Conference held in 1981, concentrating solely on the development of the weakest segment of the international community, kindled strong hopes. It was a timely reaffirmation of global solidarity. However, in reality, the decade of the 1980s presented LDCs with a series of disappointments, frustrations and setbacks.

The quality of life in the least developed countries has deteriorated further during the decade. Average per capita income has declined steadily. The stranglehold of poverty has made human survival uncertain. Most social development indicators have shown little or no improvement in these countries.

The increasing impoverishment of LDCs and deterioration of the living conditions for most of the population is neither accidental nor transitory, but the result of historical and structural circumstances, both internal and international. Its reversal is, therefore, an immediate common task for the global community. Committed international co-operation is essential if progress is to be made towards achieving the goal of eradicating poverty in the LDCs on an urgent, lasting and comprehensive basis.

It is unfortunate that none of the major targets of the SNPA have been achieved satisfactorily. As a result, the economic and social conditions of these countries as a whole continue to remain critical. We know that the causes of this failure are many, but the deterioration in the international economic environment is, perhaps, the most serious among them.

It is important to underscore that, although success of their development programmes during the 1990s will critically depend to a large extent on their own efforts, the LDCs will continue to depend massively on a supportive external economic environment and adequate support of the international community for the success of their own efforts. The overall trend of present resource flows - both in quantity and in quality - to the LDCs will have to be reversed if those countries are to be put on the path of sustained development. There is also an imperative necessity to promote a consensus on a more fundamental approach to the problem of debt of the LDCs.

Market access is another important field where our development partners can help us the most. In recent years, LDCs had to face the consequences of a renewed upsurge of protectionism.

Environmental issues have emerged as an area of serious concern and will be of increasing importance for the LDCs in the coming years. Managing our natural resource and ecology is, therefore, a crucial prerequisite for preserving the existing quality of life, not to mention raising it to desired levels.

In 1981 by adopting the Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA), the international community recognized that the LDCs have qualitative differences in the economic characteristics and problems. In 1990, this recognition is becoming particularly crucial in designing stabilization and adjustment programmes now being followed by major international financial institutions, and supported by important donor countries.

Your deliberations will, I am sure, take these issues into account as you embark on the drafting of a Declaration outlining an action programme for the LDCs for the 1990s. We must prove to the others that we mean business. We must be able to put across forcefully our message to the international community. From Dhaka, we do commence our united common struggle to secure a better life for all of us.

Before I conclude I would like to thank UNCTAD Secretary-General Kenneth Dadzie and his colleagues wholeheartedly for the full involvement of UNCTAD in the preparations and holding of the Dhaka Meeting. Our thanks also go to the United Nations Development Programme for all its support to our Meeting. The Government of Japan deserves our sincerest thanks for their generous and crucial support at a critical time.

In conclusion, I would say that if in 1981 the international community undertook a rescue effort to save the LDCs from collapse, in 1990 we would need a supportive push to set us on the path to self-sustaining growth and all-round development.

C. STATEMENT BY MR. K.K.S. DADZIE, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNCTAD

It is an honour for me to address this Ministerial Meeting in my capacity as the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, whose message I have just had the privilege of reading to the Meeting (cf. section D), the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, Mr. Antoine Blanca, and my colleagues in the UNCTAD secretariat, I would like to express thanks and appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for the excellent arrangements that it has made for this Meeting and its warm hospitality.

The timely initiative of the Government of Bangladesh in convening this Meeting is greatly appreciated by all who are committed to a successful outcome of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. We look to this Meeting not only to mobilize the Governments of the least developed countries in their approach to the Conference, but also to make a constructive input to the collective intergovernmental preparations, notably to the work of the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries acting as Preparatory Committee for the Conference, which will meet in Geneva from 26 March to 6 April 1990.

The preparations for the Paris Conference coincide with a positive phase in international relations, characterized by a relaxation of traditional political tensions between East and West. This should, in principle, give positive impetus to international economic relations and to multilateral co-operation for development. At the present time the focus of international political attention is on Europe: on the policy reforms in the east of the continent, the growing integration of the west, and the building of bridges between the two. These too are fundamentally positive political trends. However, they carry the risk of a certain economic introversion which, unless it is countered by far-sighted political vision, could work to the detriment of international support for the development efforts of developing countries. This risk is present not only because of limitations on the availability of official funds, but also because investment opportunities in Europe are diverting corporate attention from such opportunities in the third world. Let us hope that political wisdom will prevail and that these developments will, in fact, permit renewed attention to the causes of the North-South divide and renewed commitment to measures to overcome it.

This is the context in which the specific structural handicaps of the least developed countries, the weakest partners in the international community, will be addressed by the Conference next September. It has been the purpose of the preparatory process, which the UNCAD secretariat has had the privilege to organize on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to highlight the specificity of these handicaps within the overall problèmatique of development shared by all developing countries. The preparations for the Conference have also addressed the twin challenges set by the General Assembly in determining the mandate of the Conference, namely to learn from the past and to innovate for the future.

Looking to the past, one has to agree that the 1980s produced a generally dismal record for the least developed countries, despite the commitments undertaken in the Substantial New Programme of Action adopted by the first Paris Conference in 1981. The UNCTAD secretariat believes this record can be explained by a combination of domestic policy shortcomings, an inclement international economic environment, insufficient international support, and inadequate structural adjustment programmes. Of course, the mix of factors varies from country to country. However, all these inadequacies will need to be corrected if the 1990s are to end on a brighter note. The fact that the causes of under-achievement, apart from those relating to natural disasters, are the result of man-made policies itself imples that a brighter future is within the realm of possibility. For policies are by definition reversible, if the necessary political will is exercised by all parties concerned.

It is this political will which the Paris Conference must mobilize and to which this Ministerial Meeting must contribute. Indeed, it is only through strengthened commitments, both by the least developed countries and by their development partners, that progress in the 1990s could be achieved. The Paris Conference can thus be seen as a forge for a more vigorous partnership aimed at accelerating the development of the least developed countries. It is important for the success of the Conference that in principle these sets of commitments should not be seen as mutually conditional but rather as complementary. Conditionality will, in fact, be a key issue in specific policy areas to be discussed at the Conference and it is important that it should be addressed in the correct perspective.

On the side of the LDCs, each country has the responsibility of mobilizing its national resources fully and effectively in accordance with its specific endowments, needs and objectives. Each country will need to adopt sound macro-economic policies geared towards the acceleration of economic growth and long-term development, as well as sectoral policies and policies aimed at alleviating poverty and problems of vulnerable groups. The conditions attached to the international support for such policies must be appropriately targeted, if they are not to give rise to economic, social and indeed political problems. Thus, while support for structural adjustment policies should be related to appropriate performance criteria, support to sectoral policies should be based on the long-term priorities of each country and on the quality of programmes put forward for such support. Moreover, international support should make allowances and provide compensation for the effects of external shocks over which the least developed countries have no influence.

If there were to be an understanding on these lines in Paris, one of the conditions for success will have been secured. The UNCTAD secretariat has put forward a number of proposals and guidelines, in its main policy document for the Intergovernmental Group, aimed at promoting such an understanding.

A second key issue at the Conference will be the nature and extent of commitments by donors to provide external financial resources to LDCs in adequate volumes and on adequate terms. The need to increase official development assistance to LDCs will be the predominant topic under this heading, as it was at the 1981 Conference. This increased need results in part from the failure of donors to achieve the 0.15 per cent GNP target set by that Conference. The actual figure achieved in the 1980s has averaged 0.09 per cent. It is essential that the commitments made at the second Conference be more effective. Moreover, the UNCTAD secretariat has calculated that, for the LDCs as a whole to attain an annual growth rate of some 5 per cent in the latter part of the 1990s - that is, a rate significantly above projected population growth - donors should endeavour to double ODA flows to LDCs in the next five years and aim at providing 0.2 per cent of their GNP as ODA to LDCs by the end of the 1990s.

Another topic under this heading, which did not figure at the 1981 Conference, is that of relief for external debt, which for LDCs is a phenomenon of the 1980s. The constraint imposed by the debt overhang on the development efforts of these countries, which are least equipped to deal with it, must be broken through concerted efforts by all of their creditors.

The third and final element of what may be seen as the essential Conference package is agreement on effective follow-up and monitoring mechanisms at national, regional and global levels. This, too, was an issue in 1981 and useful lessons, both positive and negative can be drawn from the experience of the 1980s. It is important that national level follow-up mechanisms should be better focused on the key elements of the programme of action to be adopted by the Conference next September. Here, too, the UNCTAD secretariat has put forward a number of proposals which we believe wou'd help to achieve the desired result.

In concentrating on these three points, I do not intend to imply that other issues before the Conference are less significant. On the contrary many important questions will have to be discussed concerning the mobilization of human capacities in the least developed countries, including the strengthening of indigenous private enterprise, the modernization and integration of their productive base, the particular problems of land-locked and island least developed countries, and supportive measures in the field of trade. All these will need to be woven together in a coherent whole.

I am convinced that this aim is within reach and that the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be qualitatively different from the first in the effectiveness of its outcome. Much will depend on the action taken between now and September. I urge Ministers present here to make the preparation for this Conference an item of priority on the agendas of their respective national Governments and to come to the Conference ready to engage in serious dialogue and meaningful commitments. I also urge Ministers to use the intervening months to call upon

the support of their counterparts in other developing countries, in the spirit of solidarity which has always characterized the Group of 77. Finally, I urge Ministers to mobilize the attention of the political leadership of the industrialized countries through concerted political action which could lead to supportive decisions at the forthcoming meeting of Heads of Government of the seven major industrialized countries, and to the required action by the international community as a whole at the Conference itself.

I wish this Meeting every success. I regret that previous commitments oblige me to leave you before its conclusion. However, my Deputy, together with other colleagues from the UNCTAD secretariat and from the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation will be fully at your disposal and stand ready to extend all such assistance as you may require.

D. MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE MINISTERIAL MEETING

It is with great pleasure that I convey to all of you my best wishes. This historic Meeting is a manifestation of your commitment to enhance the cause of international co-operation and of your determination to accelerate the development process in your countries. As we prepare for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, it is of critical importance that the least developed countries themselves play a leading role in defining their needs and the actions required. The Government of Bangladesh is to be congratulated for the initiatives it has taken in this regard.

The gravity of the problems faced by the least developed countries and the urgency for corrective action have become increasingly apparent. Without going into details, it is simply not acceptable that 42 countries with a combined population of over 400 million people continue to be trapped in a vicious circle of poverty and weakness.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, we are witnessing a lessening of political tensions which allows us to envisage a more humane world. There is increasing recognition of the interdependence of all nations and the benefit of collective action in dealing with pressing economic, social and environmental problems. Technological changes are reshaping the face of the world and opening new opportunities for the welfare of mankind. We must seize these opportunities to fashion and implement a programme to benefit the poorest among us. It is in response to this challenge that the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be convened in Paris in September 1990 to seek agreement on mutually supportive actions by the countries themselves and the international community. In this context, I would like to underline the need to strengthen international support to the least developed countries through, in particular, increased financial flows, debt relief, and improved market access. Given the urgency of the situation, the Conference must be an occasion for commitment to meaningful action.

Your Meeting is a critical part of the preparations for the Conference. As I indicated earlier, it is essential for the success of the Conference that it benefit from your advice in formulating a programme for the 1990s based on your own development priorities. You are called on to identify the additional efforts which each of your Governments will have to make and, equally important, the kind of support you will need from the international community.

May I wish you all success in your deliberations.

III. AGENDA OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Election of the Bureau

3. Assessment of the progress at the country level during the 1980s in the light of the Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries

4. Review of progress in the international support measures pursuant to the SNPA

5. Consideration and adoption of Declaration by the Ministers containing, inter alia, an action plan including national policies and international support measures for accelerating the development process of the LDCs during the 1990s in accordance with their long-term national social and economic objectives

6. Other measures

IV. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Afghanistan

1. H.E. Mr. Sultan Hussain, Minister of Planning
2. Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Jawshan, Chargé d'Affaires, of the Embassy of the Republic of Afghanistan in Bangladesh
3. Mr. Hafizullah Ayubi, Director, International Economic and Financial Relations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Bangladesh

1. H.E. Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud, Head of Delegation, Foreign Minister
2. H.E. Air Vice Marshal (Retd) A.K. Khandkar, Minister for Planning
3. H.E. Dr. Wahidul Huq, Minister for Finance
4. Mr. Khorshed Alam, Secretary, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance
5. Mr. M.A. Syed, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture
6. Mr. Enam A. Choudhury, Secretary, External Resources Division
7. Mr. M. Mokammel Huq, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce
8. Mr. A.K.M. Mosharraf Hossain, Secretary, Ministry of Industries
9. Mr. Abul Ahsan, Foreign Secretary
10. Mr. Habibur Rahman, Additional Secretary, President Secretariat
11. Mr. Reaz Rahman, Director-General (United Nations), Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12. Mr. Abdul Quayyum, Director-General (IO), Ministry of Foreign Affairs
13. Mr. A.H.G. Mohiuddin, Alternate Permanent Representative to the United Nations
14. Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Director-General (EA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-ordinator, Substantive Papers Sub-Committee
15. Mr. M.M. Reza, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce
16. Mr. K.M. Ejazul Huq, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and Co-ordinator, Transport and Protocol Sub-Committee
17. Mr. M.G. Kibria, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism

18. Mr. A.W. Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources

19. Mr. Shamsuzzaman Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Finance Division and Co-ordinator, Finance Sub-Committee

20. Mr. A.M.M. Nasrullah Khan, Police Commissioner, Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Co-ordinator, Security, Protection and Traffic Sub-Committee

21. Mr. A.B.M. Abdul Matin, Director-General, External Publicity and Co-ordinator, Media and Publicity Sub-Committee

22. Syed Jamaluddin, Joint Chief, External Resources Division

23. Mr. Amir Ali Khan Majlis, Joint Chief, Ministry of Planning

24. Dr. Toufiq Ali, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-ordinator, Conference Documentation/Servicing, Sub-Committee

25. Dr. Iftekhar A. Choudhury, Deputy Permanent Representative, Bangladesh Permanent Mission, New York

26. Mr. Shahabuddin Bhuiyan, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

27. Mr. Iftikharul Karim, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

28. Mr. Mohammad al-Haroon, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

29. Dr. Salauddin Ahmed, Adviser, Planning Commission

30. Mr. Shahed Akhtar, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

31. Mr. Azizur Rahman, Deputy Sectetary, External Resources Division

32. Dr. Khalilur Rahman, First Secretary, Bangladesh Permanent Mission, New York

33. Mr. Liaquat Ali Choudhury, First Secretary, Bangladesh Permanent Mission, New York

34. Ms. Nasim Firdaus, First Secretary, Bangladesh Permanent Mission, Geneva

35. Mr. Mahfuzul Haque, Assistant Sectretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

36. Mr. Akhtar Ahmed, Assistant Secretary, External Resources Division

37. Mr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Bhutan

1. H.E. Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, Minister for Foreign Affairs

2. H.E. Mr. Karma Dorjee, Ambassador of Bhutan to Bangladesh

3. Mr. Tika Sharma, First Secretary, Dhaka

4. Mr. Mandhoj Tamang, Deputy Director, Planning Commission

5. Mrs. Sonam Yangchen, Secretary to Hon'ble Foreign Minister

6. Mr. Sangay Rinchhen, Third Secretary, Dhaka

Botswana

1. H.E. Hon. D.N. Magang, Assistant Minister for Finance and Development Planning

2. Mr. G.N. Thipe, Chief Economist

3. Mr. T.T. Gower, Director, Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Burundi

1. H.E. Mr. Jacques Hakizimana, Ambassador of Burundi in Riyadh

Cape Verde

1. Mr. Jose Luis Monteiro, Director-General of International Co-operation, Ministry of Planning and Co-operation

Central African Republic

1. H.E. Mr. Thierry Bingaba, State Secretary (Minister) for Planning and International Co-operation

2. Ambassador Sissa Le Bernard, Foreign Ministry

Chad

1. Mr. Facho Balaam, Secretary of State for Planning and Co-operation

2. Mr. Enoch Djondang Tchaknone, Administrator, Ministry of Planning and Co-operation

Democratic Yemen

1. H.E. Mr. Salem Abdul Sheikh Faris, Ambassador, Director of International Organizations and Conferences Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2. H.E. Mohamed Bin Mohamed Al Hubeishi, Ambassador

Djibouti

1. H.E. Mr. Moussa Bouraleh Robleh, Minister of Trade, Transport and Tourism

2. Mr. Djama Mahamoud Haid, Chief, Economic Affairs, Ministry of Trade

3. Mr. Ali Soubaneh Farah, Director of Planification

4. Mr. Abdourahman Doualeh Farah, Director of Statistics, Ministry of Trade, Transport and Tourism

5. Mr. Mohamed Osman Chireh, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation

Ethiopia

1. Mr. Y. Woldemichael, Commissioner, (Delegation Leader), Head of the Production Sector in the ONCCP

2. Mr. Kebbede Tiku, Department Head of United Nations Organizations

3. Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, Division Head of Macro Economics

Gambia

1. H.E. Mr. Mbemba Jatta, Minister for Economic Planning and Industrial Development

2. Mr. Baboucar Sompo-Ceesay, Director of Planning, Ministry of Economic Planning and Industrial Development

Guinea

1. H.E. Abdourahamane Sow, Ambassador of Guinea in Bangladesh, Head of Delegation

2. Mr. Kamano Michel, National Director of Planning, Head of Delegation

3. Mrs. Moussoukoro Khaba, Section Chief, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

4. Mr. Mohamed Bangoura, Financial Attaché, Embassy of Guinea in Bangladesh

Guinea-Bissau

1. Mr. Jose Biai, Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Planning

Haiti

1. H.E. Mr. Michel Bonnet, Minister of Planning and Internal Co-operation

2. H.E. Mr. Glodys C. Saint-Phard, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations

Lesotho

1. H.E. Mr. Thabo B. Moeketsi, Ambassador of Lesotho in Beijing

2. Ms. Mamotseare C. Mphutlane, Economist, Ministry of Planning

Maldives

1. H.E. Hon'ble Abdul Rasheed Hussain, Minister of State for Presidential Affairs

2. Mr. Ismail Shafeeu, Deputy Minister for Planning and Environment

3. Mr. Mohamed Shihab, Director of External Resources, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mali

1. H.E. Mr. Soueyman Dembele, Minister for Planning

2. Mr. Mamadou Namory Traore, Director of International Co-operation

Mauritania

1. H.E. Mr. Ould Moctar Neche Melainine, Ambassador and Director, International Organizations Department

Myanmar

1. H.E. U Min Aung, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Planning and Finance

2. H.E. U Soe Myint, Ambassador of Myanmar to Bangladesh

3. U Soe Thwin, Director-General, Department of Foreign Economic Relations, Ministry of Planning and Finance

4. U Kyaw Tint Swe, Acting Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

5. U Saw Hlaing, Assistant Director, Office of the Council of Ministers

6. U Kyaw Myint, First Secretary, Dhaka

7. U Khin Maung, Third Secretary, Dhaka

Nepal

1. H.E. Mr. Shailendra Kumar Upadhyay, Foreign Minister

2. H.E. Dr. Mohan Prasad Lohani, Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh

3. Mr. Y.K. Silwal, Joint Secretary, Foreign Ministry

4. Mr. Bhupal Man Shakya, Under Secretary, Ministry of Finance

5. Mr. Tej P. Koirala, Section Officer, Foreign Ministry

6. Mr. Madhab Ghimire, Section Officer, National Planning Commission

Niger

1. Mr. Hamidou Hassane Diallo, Director of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation

Rwanda

1. H.E. Col. Aloys Nsekalije, Minister for Industry and Handicrafts and member of the Central Committee of the ruling party (MRND)

2. Mr. Twagirayezu Alexis, Director-General, Ministry of Planning

3. Mr. Dominique Savio Mulindahabi, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation

Sierra Leone

1. H.E. Hon'ble Dr. Shekah Kanu, Minister of Economic Planning and National Development

2. Mr. T.M. Kortequee, Civil Servant

Somalia

1. H.E. Mohamed Mohamud Garad, Director-General of International Organizations, Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2. H.E. Mr. Mohamed Osman Omar, Ambassador of Somalia to India

Sudan

1. H.E. Dr. Farouq El-Bushra, Minister of Trade, Co-operation and Supply

2. H.E. Ambassador Awad Mohamed El-Hassan, Director for the Economic Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Togo

1. H.E. Ambassador Koffi Adjoyi, Permanent Representative in New York

2. Mr. Latevi-Atcho Lawson, Director, Economic Co-operation, Foreign Ministry

Uganda

1. H.E. Mr. Mathew Rukikaire, Minister of State for Planning and Economic Development

United Republic of Tanzania

1. Mr. A.G.K. Mwakapugi, Assistant Director of External Sector, President's Office, Planning Commission

Vanuatu

1. H.E. Mr. Donald Kalpokas, Foreign Minister

2. Mr. Jean-Pierre Nirua, Acting Director, National Planning and Statistics Office

Yemen Arab Republic

1. Mr. Saeed Mohamed Kasem, Under Assistant Secretary, Central Planning Organization and Director-General of Technical Assistance Projects, Ministry of Development

Special Invitees

1. His Exellency Mr. K.K.S. Dadzie, Secretary-General, UNCTAD and Secretary-General of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

2. H.E. Mr. Henri Servant, Ambassador and Co-ordinator of the Government of France for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

UNCTAD SECRETARIAT

1. Mr. Y. Berthelot, Deputy Secretary-General, UNCTAD

2. Mr. P.N. Pant, Executive Secretary, United Nations Conference and Chief, Special Programme for Least Developed Countries, UNCTAD

3. Mr. Pedro Roffe, Chief, Liaison Office, New York

4. Mrs. G. Wegener, Deputy Executive Secretary for the Conference and Chief, International Support Measures Section, Special Programme for LDCs

5. Mr. M.A. Ngororano, Chief, Land-Locked and Island Developing Countries Section, Special Programme for LDCs

6. Mr. Sham Bathija, Economic Affairs Officer, Special Programme for LDCs

7. Mr. A. Abbas, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of the Conference

8. Mrs. Kamala Narasimhan, Administrative Assistant, Special Programme for LDCs

UNITED NATIONS

1. Mr. J.D. Whaley, Director for Operational Activities, Office of Director-General of the United Nations for Development and International Economic Co-operation

UNDP

1. Mr. Tufan Bener, LDC Co-ordination Unit, UNDP

UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

1. Mr. G. de Kalbermatten, Chief, Policy Planning and Evaluation Unit

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

1. Mr. S.P. Upadhyay, Chief, LDCs Section, Development Planning Division

UNITED NATIONS CENTRE ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

1. Dr. Azizul Islam, Senior Transnational Corporations Affairs Officer

V. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

A. Main documents

1. Draft declaration by the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries at their meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh

2. Contribution to a draft ministerial declaration by the representatives of least developed countries based in Geneva

B. Background documents

1. The Substantial New Programme for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries

2. Elements for a Programme of Action for the 1990s for the Least Developed Countries

3. Least Developed Countries, 1988 Report

4. Final Act of UNCTAD VII

5. Report of the Meeting of Governmental Experts of Donor Countries and Multilateral and Bilateral Financial and Technical Assistance Institutions with Representatives of the Least Developed Countries, A/CONF.147/PC/2, TD/B/AC.17/30, A/CONF.147/DR/6

6. Second United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, General Assembly resolution 42/177

7. Declaration by the Conference of Ministers of African Least Developed Countries

8. Report of the Expert Group Meeting in Preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (ESCAP)